

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 02894 251437Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06  
ACDA-12 TRSE-00 /073 W  
-----041390 260342Z /64

R 251428Z FEB 78  
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8304  
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST  
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST  
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE  
AMCONSUL MUNICH  
AMEMBASSY SOFIA  
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 02894

E.O. 1 652:GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UR, US  
SUBJECT: SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDUM MEETS, BREZHNEV IN  
CHARGE

REF: (A) MOSCOW 2704 (B) MOSCOW 2611 (C) 77 MOSCOW 14456

SUMMARY: AT FEBRUARY 24 SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDUM MEETING,  
BREZHNEV LOOKED WELL AND GAVE CALCULATED IMPRESSION OF  
PHYSICAL CAPACITY TO FULFILL LEADERSHIP FUNCTIONS.  
END SUMMARY

1. AS EXPECTED, THE SS PRESIDUM MET FEBRUARY 24 IN  
REGULAR SESSION TO DISCUSS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE  
TASKS SET BY THE TWENTY-FIFTH PARTY CONGRESS AND THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION. ONCE AGAIN  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 02894 251437Z

IMPORTANT PARTS OF THE MEETING WERE CARRIED ON TV WITH  
MOST OF THE FOOTAGE DEVOTED TO BREZHNEV AS CHAIRMAN  
(REF C).

2. KOSYGIN REPORTED ON THE EXECUTION OF PROPOSALS WHICH  
CAME OUT OF THE SEVENTH SS PRESIDUM MEETING DEALING  
WITH THE NEW CONSTITUTION. HE SPOKE OF MEASURES TAKEN

TO STRENGTHEN THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO CARRY OUT THE DECISIONS OF THE SUPREME SOVIET. POLYAKOV, CHAIRMAN OF THE BELORUSSIAN SS PRESIDUM, REPORTED ON THE ACTIVE WORK UNDERTAKEN BY BELORUSSIAN DEPUTIES UNDER PARTY LEADERSHIP TO MEET THE GOALS OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH PARTY CONGRESS AND FULFILL THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION. PONOMAREV PROVIDED A REPORT ON THE RECENT SS DELEGATION VISIT TO THE U.S. THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THIS ASPECT OF THE PRESIDUM MEETING, INCLUDING BREZHNEV'S REMARKS ON US-SOVIET RELATIONS (SEPTTEL), WAS MORE EXTENSIVE THAN THAT DEVOTED TO INTERNAL ASPECTS.

3. AT THE CONCLUSION OF EACH REPORT, BREZHNEV WAS SHOWN ON TV COMMENTING AND OCCASIONALLY ADDING SUGGESTIONS. FOLLOWING POLYAKOV'S PRESENTATION, FOR EXAMPLE, BREZHNEV COMMENTED THAT IT IS THE DUTY OF THE GOVERNMENT TO ASSURE DEMOCRACY IN THE SOVIET UNION IN DEED AS WELL AS WORD. THE GOVERNMENT HE ADDED MUST ACCOMPLISH ITS GOALS WHILE KEEPING IN MIND THAT IT MUST NOT IN ANY WAY DEPRIVE THE PEOPLE OF THEIR "DEMOCRATIC INITIATIVES."

4. AS IN OTHER RECENT APPEARANCES, BREZHNEV LOOKED ON TV AS IF HE HAD FULLY RECOVERED FROM HIS RECENT ILLNESS. HE SPOKE WITH SOME VIGOR, USING HAND AND HEAD MOVEMENTS TO EMPHASIZE HIS POINTS. IN COMPARISON WITH RECENT PROTOCOL APPEARANCES, THIS ONE WAS DESIGNED TO PORTRAY CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 02894 251437Z

BREZHNEV IN CONTROL OF AN IMPORTANT, HIGH-LEVEL WORKING MEETING, AND THUS TO PERSUADE PUBLIC THAT HE IS FULLY CAPABLE OF DEALING WITH MATTERS OF STATE, DESPITE HIS RECENT ILLNESS.

5. RASHIDOV AND SHCHERBITSKIY WERE ABSENT FROM THE SS PRESIDUM MEETING. SHCHERBITSKIY MISSED ALL OF THE WEEK'S ACTIVITIES AT THE KREMLIN, WHILE RASHIDOV WAS SEEN THE DAY BEFORE (FEBRUARY 23) AT THE ARMY ANNIVERSARY RECEPTION.

6. COMMENT: BREZHNEV'S PERFORMANCE AT THE PRESIDUM MEETING AFTER A BUSY WEEK IN THE PUBLIC EYE (REFS A AND B) STRIKES US AS A CAPSTONE TO HIS FULL RETURN TO PUBLIC LIFE AFTER A PERIOD OF POOR HEALTH. MEDIA TREATMENT HAS CLEARLY BEEN DESIGNED TO DEMONSTRATE HIS FULL RECOVERY: HE HAS BEEN SHOWN IN ROLE OF WORLD LEADER BY MEETING WITH FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES AND HEADS OF STATE; HIS SUPREMACY OVER THE ARMED FORCES WAS SYMBOLIZED BY THE ORDER OF VICTORY AWARD (REF B); AND NOW HE HAS BEEN SHOWN OSTENSIBLY PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE RUNNING OF THE GOVERNMENT. TAKEN TOGETHER,

THIS SERIES OF HEAVILY PUBLICIZED APPEARANCES IS DOUBTLESS  
INTENDED TO PUT AN END TO THE WIDESPREAD SPECULATION,  
BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD, OF BREZHNEV'S DECLINING HEALTH,  
SPECULATION WHICH REACHED A CRESCENDO FOLLOWING THE  
ANNOUNCED POSTPONEMENT OF BREZHNEV'S VISIT TO THE FRG.  
MATLOCK

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PRESIDIUUM, POLITICAL LEADERS, MEETINGS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 25 feb 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978MOSCOW02894  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780088-0850  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** MOSCOW  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1978/newtext/t19780213/aaaaakgj.tel  
**Line Count:** 122  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** 66a1b5cf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 78 MOSCOW 2704, 78 MOSCOW 2611, 77 MOSCOW 14456  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 02 jun 2005  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 3476551  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDIUUM MEETS, BREZHNEV IN CHARGE  
**TAGS:** PINT, PGOV, UR, US, (BREZHNEV, LEONID I)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/66a1b5cf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014